

# Public Lake Delhi FACT Sheet

## Local Participation Facts:

- Local Community Private Fundraising campaign - \$1.7 Million dollars raised so far
- \$6.0 Million Bond Referendum passed by local Lake Delhi Taxing district with a vote of 95%+ yes vote
- Thousands of volunteer hours and volunteer equipment have been invested in cleaning up the lake bed end to end (estimated savings via volunteer effort and equipment: \$300,000-\$500,000). The Iowa DNR has applauded the local community clean-up effort.
- 97%+ Yes vote in favor to transfer ownership of Dam to Lake Delhi Taxing Combined Recreational and Water Quality District Public Entity
- Dam Ownership transfer to the public entity is currently in process
- Pat Colgan, Licensed Professional Civil Engineer contributing time and expertise is acting as a volunteer project facilitator to support Stanley Consultants and Lake Taxing District (*saving hundreds of thousands of dollars in project costs*)

## Economic Impact Facts:

- **Not restoring public Lake Delhi will cost the Maquoketa Valley School District up to \$700,000/year. Based on the School Aid Formula, this will mean the State will be forced to subsidize the school district up to \$300,000 a year starting 7/1/12, every year forever**
- Drop in Property tax revenue will cost the county 1.2 million dollars per year in lost revenue
- Land values in the area have declined by 45 million dollars in the first year alone
- According to the Governor's task force land values could drop by as much as 87 million dollars if the public lake is not restored
- According to the 2011 Iowa State University Landscape Architecture/Community Design Study: Lake Delhi is eight hundred percent (**800%**) more valuable per mile vs. a River
- According to an economic survey completed after the 2010 flood event and presented to the Governor's task force, the local economic impact will be in excess of 120 million dollars per year if the public lake is not restored
- With a 1.5 years of Lake Delhi area being a 'river', we have not seen any measurable influx of kayakers, canoers, or other people who would use the river as a recreational destination
- Local Businesses have consistently reported a decrease in seasonal sales from 22% to 74% since the breach of the dam

### Public Access Facts

- Lake Delhi is and always has been a public lake with public access
- Lake Delhi has 2 Full-Service Public Campground Parks (totaling 305 Acres with many campsites, multiple picnic shelters, and multiple playgrounds), both with significant Lake Delhi water frontage and public boat ramps
- There are 3 Public Boat Ramps on Lake Delhi, 2 of these having docking facilities
- There are 3 Local full service Marina's
- Public docks and public beaches are always available for visiting boaters to use any time
- 2 large public beaches in addition to the other campground water frontage
- The Taxing district continues to work aggressively to improve public access opportunities
- Lake Delhi is unique in that it provides the public both 'river' and 'lake' recreational activities due to its shape and configuration
- Lake Delhi is 18 miles of shoreline, larger than Clear Lake

### Hydrologic / Engineering Study Facts:

- Lake Delhi is a 'Run-of-the-River' facility, meaning Lake Delhi is not holding back water. Dams of this nature have no significant upstream or downstream water level impacts. Water levels are controlled by the DNR for this type of impoundment.
- The Stanley Consultants proposed modern dam design (with the addition of the modern spillway design) for Lake Delhi will handle and pass between a 500 to 1000 year flood event without failure (this is equivalent to more than twice the flood capacity [2.3X] that has occurred in the last 80 years)
- Stanley Consultants has completed their extensive studies, using DNR criteria and methodology, and has determined the dam at Lake Delhi to be a 'moderate' hazard dam rating, as defined by Iowa Code.
- Stanley Consultants, in addition to multiple other agency studies, has determined the existing concrete dam structure as "sound".
- **"Virtually all dammed water impoundments or reservoirs in the Midwest have very similar watershed ratios as Lake Delhi. There are many examples of dammed lakes that have the same watershed ratio as Lake Delhi." - Pat Colgan, Licensed Professional Civil Engineer; Executive Management for multiple hydro-electric power plant dam and reservoir construction and operation projects throughout the upper Midwest.**
- Stanley Engineering, after conducting their extensive studies, has concluded that the cost to rebuild the dam will be \$11.9 Million; this is in line with our original estimate

### Fisheries/Lake Recreational Value Facts:

- Fish Ladder requirements: Iowa law/code requires that a study must be done to support or not support the feasibility of a fish ladder. Stanley Engineering, as part of their comprehensive studies partially funded by the State of Iowa, did perform a feasibility study of a fish ladder -- it was concluded that a fish ladder is not feasible with the Lake Delhi dam.
- Iowa law does not require the inclusion of a fish ladder in a project like this, only a study to determine the feasibility and necessity of inclusion. The final determination is made by the DNR
- We are not aware of any fish species in Iowa that require migration to headwaters to spawn
- "Dams can serve as an effective barrier to the upstream migration of some non-native invasive species." - Stanley Consultants
- There has been aggressive Annual Fish Stocking program at Lake Delhi paid for with private funding since 1992 (20 years) through the Lake Delhi Fish and Game Club. Since 2003, over 83,000 fish (wide variety of fish including bass, pan fish, etc...) have been stocked via this program
- Lake Delhi has had annual public fishing tournaments supported by the local Lake Delhi Fish and Game club since 1992. At the most recent fishing tournament held, **81% of fishing participants came from outside the Lake Delhi area.** 41% of the Lake Delhi Fish and Game Club Members are from outside the Lake Delhi area.
- Lake Delhi is one of very few public lakes in Eastern Iowa with the wide variety of public recreational opportunities that exist.
- Lakes appeal to a much wider audience and have much wider array of recreational activity possibilities than rivers.

### Water Quality Facts:

- Dennis Lyons, Administrator - **Delaware County Iowa Water and Sanitation Department:**
  - "Ever since the breach and Lake Delhi went away, I have not seen one issue through my own efforts nor have I received 1 phone call from anyone about a sewage or disposal problem of any kind in the Lake Delhi area. And with the lake water gone, it would be very easy to see these issues. If there was a problem, it would be very easy to tell, but I am not aware of any at Lake Delhi."
  - "Lake Delhi is and has been monitored under the law by the Delaware County Iowa Water and Sanitation Department.  
Since 1990, when a 'permitting process' for Septic systems was begun, over 400 homes on Lake Delhi have those permits in place. Further, many of the pre-permitting/pre-1990 septic systems were known by our department to have been installed correctly. The Time of Transfer Septic Inspection System Iowa State Law has been and is being fully enforced to ensure septic systems completely meet all current codes at every sale of a property at Lake Delhi,

just like everywhere else in the State of Iowa. No septic systems are grandfathered by this law. Additionally, more than 15 homes on Lake Delhi have already installed one of the most advanced septic systems available, the AdvanTex system, demonstrating that Lake Delhi property owners are concerned about wastewater and the environment."

- o "Septic Systems are as good as central sewer systems when they are properly maintained. Particularly in a flood event, Septic systems, in my opinion, are superior to central sewer systems to protect against improper sewage, and this has been demonstrated in actual flood events."
- Sedimentation: "The size of the watershed is comparable to most other midwestern impoundments and in the 80 year history of Lake Delhi they have only found it necessary to dredge once." Pat Colgan - Licensed Professional Civil Engineer, and Executive Management of multiple Hydro-electric dams in Midwest
- Blue Ribbon Fishing: The Lake Delhi dam creates 2 well known blue ribbon fisheries that do not exist without the dam (one below the dam [confirmed many times by the DNR] and a lake environment that holds species of fish that would not exist in a river environment - this fact is appealing to a wide variety of average Iowans and recreational anglers
- Water quality testing has been done at Lake Delhi for many years, on a weekly basis in partnership with the DNR. Since the testing program began, the DNR has never identified an issue with the water quality at Lake Delhi, and test readings were consistently within acceptable ranges

#### **Sustainability Facts:**

- Lake Delhi was sustainable for 80+ years until the 500 year flood event of July, 2010; with a new modern dam and spillway built to 2012 standards, it will be sustainable for many years to come
- Lake Delhi has an established public entity (a Combined Water Quality and Recreational District, the only one in the state) that will own the dam and have the ability and authority to maintain the dam
- Iowa DNR (Department of Natural Resources) has always governed this public water facility
- There has been only one dredging required in 80+ years and it was only a partial dredging
  - o *A Significant portion of the dredging cost for the public lake was paid for with private dollars*
- Lake Delhi has an established dredge spoil site that can be used for future dredging if required
- Lakes are a scarce resource in Iowa, and particularly so in North Eastern Iowa where Lake Delhi is located - so preserving and restoring a beautiful public lake is vital to Iowa

The Facts in this report were assembled by the  
Lake Delhi Watershed Committee

## THE GAZETTE'S EDITORIAL

### Restoring the Lake Delhi dam Gazette Editorial Board

**We** appreciate the Whitewater Coalition's advocacy for returning Iowa's rivers to a more natural state. Left largely to themselves, rivers can take a self-healing course toward water quality and more abundant wildlife. And the water quality in many Iowa rivers has much room for improvement, as has been frequently documented.

But trying to sink the Lake Delhi dam restoration project, especially at this point in the process, is not justified.

When torrential rains upstream breached the dam in July of 2010, the result was more than draining a 92-year-old lake. Much property was heavily damaged, property values plummeted and businesses suffered.

The issue of whether the state should help restore the dam has been debated intensively since the catastrophe. The dam and much of the land surrounding the lake were privately owned, but the lake waters were a stateowned resource with public access.

Resident and visitor spending dropped sharply after the catastrophe. Property values will be down 38 percent next fiscal year, a significant hit on what had been 8 percent of Delaware County's tax base.

The tipping point for whether to proceed with the restoration came in November when 95.1 percent of nearly 900 property owners voted themselves a substantial, 20-year property tax increase toward raising \$6 million for the estimated \$12 million project. And a private campaign has already raised \$1.7 million.

Clearly, Lake Delhi residents are invested. Last week, Gov.

Terry Branstad this week signaled his support for \$5 million in state assistance over two years. Last year, the Legislature voted intent to help.

Removing Iowa's small, aging low-head dams is gaining interest and support. It makes environmental, public safety and economic sense in many cases.

But restoring the Lake Delhi dam will bring more benefits than drawbacks.

The project should proceed with legislators' support and oversight.

■ Comments: [thegazette.com/ category/opinion/editorial](http://thegazette.com/category/opinion/editorial) or [editorial@sourcemedi.net](mailto:editorial@sourcemedi.net)